

HORSEMAN ENDS THE STRUGGLE

AS expected, Champions Wycombe Wanderers duly captured two Isthmian League points from their visit to the Surrey Oval against perennial basement boys Corinthian Casuals on Saturday. But, the Blues were again unconvincing and never matched up to their brilliant show against Banbury last Tuesday (writes Stuart Earp).

Missing from the Banbury line up was new centre forward Mick Ashwin while Alan Gane and Paul Birdseye returned to fill in the full back positions.

But from the start Wycombe struggled against a hard working Casuals side. The greasy pitch made it hard for constructive football and mistakes were common on both sides.

There was precious little atmosphere at the massive Oval cricket ground, with empty terracing stretching all round, and the hundred or so Wycombe supporters were kept well away from the pitch by the enormous outfield.

Casuals have been using the

Corinthian C. 1, Wycombe W. 2

ground under their boss Micky Stewart, the former Surrey C.C.C. skipper, who on Saturday's showing, has found a side that could in time get away from the bottom of the table.

On chances created, Casuals could well have forced a draw, squandering many useful opportunities with poor finishing. Winger Billy Haigh quickly took advantage of a Birdseye slip in the sixth minute but goalkeeper Kevin O'Brien raced out to smother his shot.

Four minutes later, however, the Casuals defence was badly

exposed. A hard centre from Keith Jameson was well controlled by Tony Horseman who spotted Tony Amos unmarked at the far post. An accurate cross saw the England striker coolly nod the ball over 'keeper Chris Lamb for a simple goal.

Wycombe's lead was short lived. Only two minutes had transpired before Casuals fought back with an equaliser. A free kick on the right was floated into the Blues penalty area and after a scramble, it was centre half Chris Joy who fired the ball high into the net to make it 1-1.

The goal was a result of rank bad defensive work by the Wycombe back four, who should have had the ball cleared long before Joy got his chance. But neither Gerry Olson nor Robb Williams could settle against their hard working opponents, who often had the beating of them in the air.

Wycombe, however, were not helped by the much over-used whistle of referee C. Boswell, who continually halted play with free kicks for the most minor offences.

Wanderers' indecisiveness from deadball situations was again in evidence after 21 minutes when Keith Eshelby blazed high over the bar.

The occasional glimpse of Mick Hollifield's speed promised much for the Blues and it was Mick who brought a great save from Lamb in the 40th minute. A long cross from the overlapping Gane was met by the winger, whose glancing header forced Lamb to dive full stretch to put the ball behind for a corner.

So at the interval, Casuals

must have been well pleased with the 1-1 stalemate. With Joy, an old fashioned but effective stopper at centre half in commanding form, their defence looked sound enough with Wycombe attacks breaking up all too regularly.

Only Tony Amos looked happy in the difficult conditions. Horseman found it hard to get into the game while Hutchinson had one of his off days. Larry Pritchard did his best to motivate the side but the cohesion that destroyed Banbury just wasn't there.

In the second half Wycombe again had the most of the play territorially, without ever dominating. Horseman was unlucky when his shot struck the 'keeper in the 68th minute but rolled along the line before being cleared.

Then Gerry Olson was only fractionally wide with a powerful header from an Amos corner. The winner eventually came after 76 minutes, tailor-made by Pritchard. Larry beat two defenders with a good run into the Casuals box before slipping the ball to Horseman. Bodger took his time before shooting high into the net.

Even then Casuals had a chance to make it 2-2 when Eshelby screwed the ball wide three minutes from time, when put through by Peter Hill. But as referee Boswell brought the game to a close, I couldn't help thinking that W. G. Grace was turning a little in his grave.

CORINTHIAN CASUALS: C. Lamb, I. Longworth, A. Franklin, R. Payne, C. Joy, N. Coulthurst, B. Tyler, D. Jones (sub P. Imison 87 mins), K. Eshelby, P. Hill, W. Haigh.

WYCOMBE WANDERERS: K. O'Brien, A. Gane, R. Williams, G. Olson, P. Birdseye, K. Jameson, M. Hollifield, L. Pritchard, A. Amos, A. Horseman, J. Hutchinson, sub. I. Rundle (not used).

Referee: C. I. Boswell.

Half time: 1-1. Goalscorers — Wycombe, Amos (10), Horseman (76); Casuals, Joy (12).